

Summary of Watershed-Based Mitigation Subcommittee Meeting

**July 18, 2005, 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM
Natural Resources Building Room 537, Olympia**

Attendees:

- Fish and Wildlife: Peter Birch, John Carleton, Margen Carlson, and Bob Zeigler
- Governor's Salmon Recovery Office: Phil Miller
- Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission: Darrell Phare
- Upper Columbia United Tribes: Bryan Flett
- Association of Washington Cities: Jackie White
- Washington State Association of Counties: Maureen Morris
- Transportation: Gary Davis, Barb Aberle, Dick Gersib, and Tim Hilliard
- Senate Transportation Committee: Alex Atchison

Notes by Tim Hilliard and Bob Zeigler.

Update on TPEAC Meeting in Bellingham and SR 539 tour:

Compliments given on great organization of meeting and field trip. Dick Gersib mentioned the benefits during Stillaguamish watershed work of accessing an valley overview site to show entire system on a field trip and wondered if this might not also be done on SR 539 and US 12 projects. There would be a TPEAC meeting in Walla Walla and would have legislators and others attending that could benefit from a Walla Walla valley overview if that were available in a field trip. Jackie mentioned that there were a lot of legislators there and good tribal representation too. Maureen said that the county's GIS watershed study was interesting and well presented. Bob commented that there could have been a lot of controversy but that the meeting went smoothly. He said that Senator Swecker reported that he was considering legislation giving more opportunity for enhancement over creation projects.

Coordination With Cites And Counties:

Jackie White and Maureen Morris discussed coordination with cites and counties and they had \$300,000 from City/County gas tax to spend on TPEAC efforts and watershed-based off-site mitigation. There will be a City and County Planners and Engineers meeting happening in Chelan. It was mentioned that this might be a good opportunity for Dick Gersib to give a short overview of watershed characterization and local planners and commissioners from Whatcom and Walla Walla counties to discuss process for SR 539 and US 12. There has been interest shown by planners, engineers and commissioners for watershed-based mitigation in Clark County and Vancouver, Lewis County, Chelan County (but would need funding) and Yakima. The Chehalis Tribe may have another potential bank site in Lewis County.

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Other:

- Phil Miller mentioned that the important salmon recovery areas were also Whatcom, Chelan, Clark, Yakima, Lewis River and Chehalis Tribe in Phase 4 Watershed Planning.
- Bryan Flett mentioned that it would be important to look and lessons learned in watershed mitigation processes and develop a curriculum on how to put it into application and obtain funding to accomplish the watershed effort.
- It was mentioned there had been some problems with mitigation sites identified in the pilot projects and needed to be greater transparency on how mitigation sites were ranked. WDFW staff had problems with sites ranking highest for mitigation areas because they were not identified as priorities in either watershed or salmon recovery plans or they were projects that already were or about to receive funding and would not be available for mitigation in phases 7 and 8. There had also been problems with sites identified in SR 539. There would need to be additional discussion on this.
- Bryan Flett mentioned he does not believe many of the eastern Washington counties were aware of the work the Tribes have done collecting watershed data and developing subbasin plans. He also mentioned the importance of the state and local entities working with tribal staff and building a relationship face to face as opposed to developing a "tribal database". The personal relationship was an important element of interfacing with the Tribes.
- Darrell Phare mentioned that state and locals need to address culture so we do not go through the same process each time because this creates frustration and then it reaches a critical point and then it gets attention. There is a need for training and it need to be mandated that everyone has a role in the process.
- Maureen and Jackie White mentioned that things had focused on restoration and recovery but there was a need for more information than just watershed restoration and recovery.

Mitigation Optimization:

Phil mentioned that Mitigation Optimization would become more and more a method to activate watershed based mitigation, especially after TPEAC sunsets in March and we need to now think about linkages. There also needed to be greater Mitigation Optimization outreach to the Tribe. It was mentioned that we first needed to meet TPEAC obligations. Phil mentioned that we need to go beyond just acknowledging Mitigation Optimization. Margen Carlson mentioned that Tim Smith, Ecology and SRF Board would be planning workshops on Habitat Work Schedules and identifying restoration opportunities that might provide mitigation opportunities and having a data base or electronic institutional memories. Also does this relate to WSDOT procedure and other development in watershed?

Watershed Subcommittee Legislative Report

The most recent Watershed Subcommittee Legislative Report was passed out. It had been revised by WSDOT to make it more readable. It may have an executive summary added. The Transportation Committee members did not respond to it but Megan White felt it was a significant improvement over earlier reports. She really liked the Watershed Subcommittee's part.

We addressed the nine Watershed Subcommittee Action Items from the report. We need to flesh out the workplan for accomplishing these items. We began to address each action item:

1. Support development of local infrastructure for development and maintenance of data bases. (What questions do we ask in a survey?)

Dick: Concept – survey locals for existing products, capabilities – is this adequate info? We need understanding of what counties are doing. We need to know what info a developer – or WSDOT – needs to provide to get meaningful data on sites back from local government. WSDOT regional staff need to tell us what info THEY need. Lists that exist are responding to needs or funds available. They are not always used.

He said that there are several specific questions we need to answer:

1. What information does WSDOT need to mitigate projects?
2. When do local jurisdictions correctly maintain a list or restoration/mitigation options?
3. Do existing needs match up with needs of WSDOT/Tribes/Local Government?
4. What information do local jurisdictions need?
5. What supplemental information and infrastructure is needed?
6. What initiatives are working on this?

Margen: Tim Smith is planning a workshop termed “Habitat Work Schedules” on developing a database of recovery options – chance to cooperate? A flexible system is needed, can be used by counties with or without existing systems.

Jackie: Will this be for whole state or just areas where we are already active? Also, remember that decisions are not up to WSDOT – locals, Ecology, WDFW, etc. Bryan: And direct relationship between WSDOT, tribes. Darrell: Does this imply that “local government” encompasses tribes, and there is no need to speak of tribes separately?

Maureen: We have “haves” and “have-nots” much of state has limited resources. Note must have a transportation tie-in – updating is crucial – online system to add sites for example. A “living list.” A database would be like an electronic memory.

Phil: There are no counties that do not have some recovery issues. All counties now have inventories, but are they useful? How would the database relate to WSDOT and other developers? We need

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to reeducate the regulators. What is appropriate mitigation? The lists must be appropriate to regulators too.

Bryan: But many counties in E. WA do not have good understanding of the work the tribes are doing. Think about how the tribes will react. Tribes prefer to meet, talk, see what the data will be used for. There is a history of giving data, then having the government come back with “here’s how we are going to use this.” Bryan also mentioned the importance of the state and local entities working with tribal staff and building a relationship face to face as opposed to developing a “tribal database”. The personal relationship was an important element of interfacing with the Tribes. Dick: Note that the next item, #2, addresses tribal issues. But it’s true – WSDOT and the tribes need closer relationship.

John: This survey will take a long time.

Darrell: What about SSHIAP data issues? This sort of problem will occur a lot in the sort of combined database we are discussing. Dick clarified that there were problems with different scales in the hydrography layers used in different parts of watersheds (1:24,000 and 1:100,000).

Maureen: Will we limit this to mitigation programs, or can we address broader issues such as shorelines regulations, zoning, etc.?

Note: After lunch we realized time was short and we had eight of the nine items left to discuss. We decided to limit conversation to short discussion of major issues, then have teams look at some of them and report back.

Workgroup for #1: Maureen Morris, Jackie White, Barb Aberle and Margen Carlson will work on this.

2. Support inclusion of tribal priorities, information (don't forget Tribes' water quality standards) and restoration opportunities into locally developed restoration data sets.

Bryan: What is relation between this committee and WSDOT’s tribal liaison group (Colleen Jollie, Megan Beeby)? We should tie to existing efforts.

Workgroup: Bryan Flett, Darrell Phare, Margen Carlson and Dick Gersib will work on this.

3. Integrate Watershed Characterization Technical Tools and Information into Existing Watershed Planning efforts.

Phil: What does this mean – locals might use our products or our methods? Dick: Both.

Maureen: Share with locals, learning opportunity.

Margen: Putting watershed characterization methods into watershed plans, salmon plans, comp plans.

Phil: “Planning units” is misleading, term used only under 2496. How about “watershed efforts?”

4. Integrate environmental mitigation needs into watershed planning - ID watersheds to test.

Dick: Could include screening tool.

5. Include the early identification of environmental mitigation needs in land use and transportation planning.

Dick: Like zoning for mitigation for example.

Phil: Is this restoration in general or is it just mitigation? Dick: Mitigation. Avoid cross purposes.

Maureen, Jackie: Problem in that Comp plans must only include projects with identified funding source.

6. Establish a planned network of advanced mitigation opportunities (identify large mitigation bank sites to a network of bank sites).

Dick: On subcommittee's workplan.

Maureen: Just Transportation or all mitigation?

Phil: Scope – statewide?

7. Conduct training as appropriate to facilitate the integration of watershed characterization and other tools created by the watershed subcommittee.

8. Explore opportunities to include tools created by the Watershed Subcommittee into WSDOT's Environmental Procedures manual.

Dick: This brings it back home. Will WSDOT change its way of doing business?

9. The subcommittee will develop tasks and timelines to implement action items 1-8 before the end of March, 2006.

General discussion:

Bryan: Where do the specific regulations of individual tribes get included? Is that #2?

Dick: Yes.

Gary: This also is more of an issue during the permitting phase, handled during consultations.

Barb: Could water quality needs be a primary target of WSDOT mitigation?

Dick: What are consultant needs?

1. If we are going to do training, we'll need to develop it.
2. Survey process for item #1.

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3. Survey process for item #2.

Jackie: Possibly for conducting training (#7).

Dick: How about a workgroup to do a draft “workplan implementation plan?”

Dick: Encouraged any one else interested in one of the nine action items to e-mail him about their interest.

Future agenda item: Bob mentioned Ecology Wetland Mitigation study that showed enhancement was less successful than even creation. Dick Gersib requested a future meeting agenda item be a discussion of wetland “no net loss,” enhancement, restoration and creation issues.

Next Meeting: The next meeting will be August 16 in the Natural Resources Building, Room 537 (Fish and Wildlife Director’s Conference Room).

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned 2:20 PM.